



# ROLE OF SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES IN BRAZILIAN BASIC EDUCATION

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## ABSTRACT

This paper evaluates the various social protection programmes and their role in the improvement of Brazilian Basic Education from 1990 to 2016. Brazil is one of the richest countries of the world, yet the country is suffering from the highest rate of inequality and high rate of poverty in the society. The poverty of families has critical impact on health and education of their children. With the dual objective of poverty reduction and for the improvement in basic services, such as health and education in the country, the government has introduced many inclusive and redistributive social protection programmes after the implementation of new constitution in 1988. These social protection programmes of Brazil have been praised internationally for their scope and innovation such as the dramatic reduction in the poverty and inequality in the Brazilian society. Besides these benefits, these programmes have proved to improve the access of Basic Education in the country. This paper reviews these social protection programmes with the help of relevant documents and from the results, it can be concluded that these programmes have proved quite beneficial in educational expansion in Brazil. And so, the experiences of Brazilian Social Protection Programmes are quite instructive in many ways for the developing countries, such as India, which are struggling with the problem of education of children from the disadvantaged sections of the society.

**KEYWORDS:** Brazil, basic education, cash transfer programmes, school nutrition programmes, social protection programmes.

## INTRODUCTION:

Brazil is the fifth most populated country in the world with a population of more than 200 million and presently the population comprises of native inhabitants, Europeans, Africans and Asians. Despite the recent financial crisis in the country, Brazil is one of the richest countries across the world. The economy of the country is growing since 1990 and at the same time the past inequalities and prevalent poverty are also decreasing. But even then, Brazilian society remains intensely unequal (Ireland, 2008). Economic inequality is a by-product of globalization and in most of the countries, such as India, it is increasing rapidly. But on the other hand, Brazil has been successful in the last two decades in reducing the economic inequality in its society with the help of various welfare schemes. The economic inequality of the country has a profound impact on the overall education system, however, the legal protections of the right to education ensured free basic education for all in the public schools (INEP-MEC 2016).

Brazil has a large system of basic education as it is compulsory for every citizen. The 2002 Education Census highlighted that almost all Brazilian children aged between 7 and 14 years were enrolled in basic school (Soares, 2004). The country has almost universal rates of enrolment in primary and lower-secondary education and there has been a dramatic process of big expansion in access to primary education from 1994 to 1999. The country has made greater strides in the provision of basic education in the last two decades and besides this, the international assessments in 2009 also indicated an impressive progress in raising the quality of education (Bruns et al., 2012).

The education system in Brazil is divided into Basic Education and Higher Education. The Basic Education System comprises of Early Childhood Education (0-5 years), Primary education (6-14 years), Secondary education/ Vocational and technological education (14-17 years). The duration of the mandatory education is 4-17 years (UNESCO-IBE, 2010; MEC, 2014). The educational policies and programmes of the government are based on principles of equality of opportunities, universal coverage, high quality, decentralization, community participation and greater social control over public expenditure and its results. Besides these, the social protection programmes have been implemented to correct the effects of social and income related disparities. All these policies, changes in the financial resources distribution and social protection programmes have helped the country for achieving significant progress in both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the education (Souza, 2001).

After the implementation of New Constitution in 1988, Brazil has started many social protection schemes and many studies have claimed that these schemes have a positive impact on the education of children from the disadvantaged sections of the society. Conditional Cash Transfer Programmes and other compensatory programmes such as school nutrition, school transportation etc. have been started by the government to keep the students in the schools. The National Fund for Educational Development (FNDE), created by the government, is an independent body linked to Ministry of Education (MEC) and it manages the allocation of resources to the education. These resources finance various programmes such as National School Nutrition Program, National Textbook Program, National School Transportation Program etc. These programmes have designed

to correct the effects of the big social and economic based inequalities in the Brazilian society (MEC, 2014).

The various studies have evaluated the role of these social protection schemes on poverty reduction, health and school attendance. Holmes et al. (2011) reported the positive impact of cash transfer programs such as Bolsa Família on quantitative educational achievements in Brazil. Brauw et al. (2015) highlighted the impact of Bolsa Família on the promotion of girl's education and reduction in the drop-out rate for boys aged between 15-17 years. Neri & Buchmann (2008) observed that the Fund for Primary Education Administration and Development and for the Enhancement of Teachers' Status (FUNDEF) has contributed for reducing education inequalities between different regions of the country. Bruns et al. (2012) pointed out that FUNDEF, Bolsa Família and other such education reforms has improved the quality of education in rural areas of the country. It has also been pointed out that Bolsa Família has reduced the gap between the education performance of rich and poor students. Neri (2017) also reported that Bolsa Família has influenced the health and education of its beneficiaries by increasing their demand due to the imposition of conditionalities.

In addition to the above-mentioned study, the international reports such as Education for All Global Monitoring Reports, OECD Reports and World Bank reports on Brazil have appreciated the social protection programmes of Brazil for their immense contribution in the extension of basic services in the country. This study is an attempt to study these social protection schemes with the help of relevant documents and also to analyse the changes in the educational statistics of the country from 1990 to 2016.

## METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:

The method of document analysis for the study of social protection programmes has been employed. Document analysis means a systematic procedure for examining or reviewing of documents related to the project or study and then interpreting these to understand the underlying concept (Bowen, 2009). To trace the change in educational statistics in basic education, the method of trend analysis has been used. The Trend analysis is considered as an interesting application of descriptive research as it is used to indicate that what has been happened in past, what the present situation reveals and on the basis of this what will happen in the near future (Best & Kahn, 2007).

## SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES:

### National School Nutrition Programme (PNAE):

The Brazilian School Nutrition Programme (PNAE) or popularly known as School Meal was started in 1955 to fight undernutrition and low levels of education. The main objectives of the programme are the development of students by meeting their nutritional needs and also enhancing the educational achievement of students by their healthy bio-psychosocial development. Besides this, the programme supports development of healthy habits among students through food and nutrition education and also supports local family farming. In Brazil, the school nutrition is universal right of students in public basic education and it is duty of state granted by the Constitution. At present the programme covers all public and community schools in basic education including day care, kindergar-

ten, elementary schools, high school to education to young adults. The school feeding programme is the responsibility of the National Fund for the Development of Education (FNDE), it is an independent agency and linked to Ministry of Education. The programme has been considered as an example of integration of education, agriculture, health and social protection (Sidaner, Balaban & Burlandy, 2012)

It is considered as one of the largest and comprehensive programs in the world with the budget of program for 2014 was R\$ 3.5 billion and it benefits approximately 43 million students in the country. The embryonic form of this program was started in 1955 with the creation of the Brazilian School Snack Campaign. The major expansion of the program has occurred between 2003 to 2012 and at present the coverage of the program was nearly universal and it has been operated in approximately all the schools of rural and urban areas of the country. With this program, there is increase in the equal opportunities for the vulnerable sections of the society to stay in the school and obtain education (MEC, 2014).

#### National Textbook Program (PNLD):

The National Textbook Program is considered as world's largest publishing program. The PNLD was established in 1985 to purchases and distributes text books to all the public schools of the country and laid down the guidelines for implementation of textbook policy. The program has been expanded and improved in 1995 and again in 2000. The old program was limited to primary school only and in 2000 the scope of the program has been extended to meet the needs of growing number of students like youth and adult also and now the books are provided to all students enrolled in basic education in public institutions. The blind students, visually impaired students and students with special education needs also receive books in Braille or Brazilian Sign Language. In addition to these, books are also provided to students enrolled in philanthropic or community based private institutions. The Ministry of Education (MEC) ensures that books should be delivered to the schools before classes begin even in the most remote municipalities and the books can be re-used for three years. The books are tailored to meet the special demands of the students and publisher were asked to improve the quality of the paper and binding (Souza, 2001). In 2012, approximately 156.8 million books were distributed among the students of primary schools, secondary schools, youth and adult education programmes and youth and adult literacy programmes. The contribution of this program for the achievement of 'Education for All' goals in the country is remarkable. The programme is considered exemplary as a successful public policy that contributed to the reduction of regional inequality in education system (MEC, 2014).

#### The National Program to Support School Transportation (PNATE):

Brazil gives priority to schools located in rural areas and manages to improve the quality of education and learning inequality by introducing various social policies with special target on disadvantaged sections of the society. In 2011, the country devoted 18 percent of total government expenditure on education. However, there is gap between the education of rural and urban students. The rural students face a number of difficulties to reach school, so school transportation programmes specially tailored according the needs of students has been started by government. The National Program to Support School Transportation (PNATE) is the program started by Ministry of Education (MEC) via National Fund for Educational Development (FNDE) for the support of school transportation for rural students enrolled in basic education.

The program consists of automatic transfer of financial resources, without the necessity of an agreement or other document, to cover the transportation expenses of vehicles used to transport students from rural areas to public schools. The expenses cover insurance, repair, taxes, licensing, maintenance and payment to third-party transportation providers. The program was started in 2004 and the amount has been transferred directly to the States, the Federal Districts and the Municipalities in ten instalments from February to November in a year. The amount transferred for school transportation is based on number of listed students who used transportation in the School Census of the previous year. In the year 2012, an amount of R\$ 673.0 billion has been invested in PNATE (MEC, 2014). The similar program named Path to School has been started in 2007 with the main objectives of acquisition of new buses and renewing the aging fleet of school vehicles. The program ensures the guarantee of safety and quality of school transportation (ibid).

#### Direct Money in School Program (PDDE):

The PDDE was created in 1995 with the main aim to provide financial assistance to schools on supplementary basis in order to contribute for the improvement and maintenance of physical and pedagogic infrastructure with a consequent increase in school performance. The financial assistance to schools is provided to supplement the budget of the school in basic education network of the states, the Federal District and the municipalities as well as private non-profit special education school registered with National Council of Social Assistance (CNAS). The program also aims to improve the social participation and school self-management. The funds have been transferred to the schools in two instalment and in 2012 approximately an amount of R\$ 2.0 billion has been invested through this program. The program is helping schools to determine their own educational path by providing sufficient resources and tools by covering expenses such as acquisition of permanent school material, small repairs in the schools, purchase of consumer goods etc. The allocation of PDDE funds does not require any kind

of secondary agreement and funds are transferred directly to the schools to improve the physical and teaching infrastructure (MEC, 2014).

#### Conditional Cash Transfer Programs:

The conditional cash transfers along with other social policies have contributed a lot towards the universal primary education in Latin America. These programmes have positive impact on the enrolments, attendance and drop-out. The conditional cash transfer programs have been started by the government to ensure that parents must overcome the social and economic barriers to keep their children in the school. These programs actually pay the families of students who attend the schools. These programs have been considered successful to lift poor families out of poverty through education (OECD, 2010). These programs have been labelled as 'development revolution from global south' due to their focus on health and education of poor people (UNESCO, 2015). The dual aims of these programs are to reduce poverty and to condition the cash transfer on certain behaviour of the families such as enrolment of their children in schools, immunizing the young children, visiting health facilities etc (Brauw et al., 2015).

The first such program named Bolsa Escola Program have been initiated in 1995 in Campinas (a Brazilian Municipality) and Brasilia (Federal District). The program was then expanded and the Federal Government also created two national programs: Minimum Income Guarantee Program (PGRM) in 1997 and Bolsa Escola Federal in 2001 (Coêlho, 2012). The PGRM, also known as 'Every Child in School' Programme, provides monthly financial aid to families having family income of less than half a minimum wage per member and have school-age children (Souza, 2001). In the Bolsa Escola, monthly grant is provided to the families whose per capita income was less than R\$ 90.00 with a condition that their children of 6 to 15 years of age are enrolled and attending the school. The program was renamed Bolsa Família in 2003. These programs have proved to helpful in reducing the drop-out rates in schools and also combating the problem of child labour to a great extent. In the year 2012, approximately 17.9 million students, out of total 50.5 million who were enrolled in basic education, received Bolsa Família stipend (OECD, 2015: 4-8).

#### IMPROVEMENTS IN BASIC EDUCATION:

The above-mentioned social protection programmes have played a positive role in the educational expansion in the country. The major changes are listed below:

1. The Net Enrolment Rate in Primary Education has improved from 86.4 percent in 1990 to 95.47 in 2016 and it has registered an increase of approximately 10 percent (UIS). This increase in enrolment rates in universal primary education has also been accompanied by increase in the school attendance rates in this level of education (MEC, 2014).
2. The drop-out rates in lower secondary education has been reduced from 39.79 percent in 1991 to 25.99 percent in 2001. It has been observed that the school drop-out among children from poor families has been decreased due to implementation of the Bolsa Família (OECD, 2015).
3. Bolsa Escola has been widely praised for its role in enhancing schooling facilities in poor families by increasing attendance and reducing drop-out problem (UNESCO, 2003; UNESCO, 2005). It has been reported that drop-out rates has been reduced by up to 75 percent among the beneficiaries of the program (UNESCO, 2008).
4. Repetition rates was a serious issue in Brazil but the repetition rates in all grade of universal primary education in the country also followed a downward trend from 18.36 percent in 1991 to 8.54 percent in 2010.
5. The value of Completion rates in primary education for Brazil also witnessed an increase from 68.84 percent in 2001 to 86.62 percent in 2016. The completion rate in lower secondary education followed an upward trend with 53.78 percent in 2005 and the value continued to increase up to 71.83 percent in 2016 (UIS).
6. Besides improving the education statistics in basic education, these programmes have also reduced the child labour problem in Brazil by increasing school attendance (UNESCO, 2010).

#### CONCLUSIONS:

With the help of these social protection schemes, Brazil has reduced prevalent inequality in the society besides improving the status of basic education in the country. In this era of globalization, when inequality is rising in the countries like India, Brazil has set an example for other developing countries by investing in such social protection schemes. The individual nations can invest in such programmes to reduce the prevalent poverty and also to provide education to the disadvantaged sections of the society. However, this study has its limitation and more studies are needed to evaluate the impact of these programmes on the quality of education in Brazil. The study concluded that these programmes have proved critical for reducing the educational inequalities between different sections of the society. The improvement in the enrolment rates, school attendance rates, drop-out rates attest the role of these programmes in educational expansion.

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